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CELTIC LEAGUE

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PRESS INFORMATION

A DANGEROUS ESCALATION

The possibility of increased military tension in the somewhat confined waters of the Irish and Celtic seas, is heightened by the recent United Kingdom decision to expand it's territorial waters to twelve miles.

The move obviously has as much to do with U.K. military security as with territorial expansionism. The extensions to the limits in the N.Irish Sea effectively block the North Channel to Soviet/Warsaw Pact A.G.I's (Intellegence gathering trawlers) - similarly the permanent A.G.I. presence off the North Irish Coast must move. There are two options for this movement North West - outside Skye, or down the Irish Sea to the West of the Isle of Man. Either move is unlikely to be militarily advantageous as the A.G.I. are unlikely to be able to fulfil their function in a position so far to the West of Scotland, and the position off the Isle of Man is relatively restricted also the ability of the U.K. to hinder the A.G.I's functions considerably enhanced. Nonetheless, either or both options will be taken up.

What the League are concerned about is that, to counter the N.A.T.O. move and to enable it's intellegence gathering operation to continue, The Warsaw Pact will deploy more submarines to complement the role of the A.G.I's.

The area in question has seen a considerable number of recorded and suspected incidents involving submaries and surface craft, and the situation now seems set for an escalation.

With steady expansion of Faslane/Holy Loch facilities, there is an obvious requirement in the U.K's interest, to keep the Soviets at arm's length, and to this end, even now that A.G.I's are expelled

from the Clyde approaches, the Royal Navy intends to monitor their movements. H.M.S. Sentinel (a former deep-sea Oil-rig tender), is currently under refit to take over the job from H.M.S. Wakeful, the Navy's most expensive 'tug', which has been surreptitiously carrying on the role for years.

The Soviets are unlikely to accept their enforced exclusion from the Clyde approaches, and indeed it is highly likely that undersea craft have already been deployed to 'fill the gap'.

In April 1982 there was an incident in which a suspected Warsaw Pact submarine came too close to a N.A.T.O. exercise in the North Channel. On that occasion, in International Waters, there was nothing the Royal Navy could do: if it happens next month during exercise, 'Purple Warrior' would the offender be depth-charged?

If so, it could be embarrassing for the observers invited from Eastern Europe's military hierarchy, to view the exercise.

This dangerous escalation has continued so long, it is past time enclosed seas like the Irish Sea (and indeed, the Baltic) were demilitarized.

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